



Charlotte Mason's House of Education,
Scale How, Ambleside, UK, 2009

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various trades, even in such a peculiarly British industry as the iron trade, and how the manufacture of chemicals, coal-tar products and the like, invented and originally carried on by Englishmen, has been transferred to the Germans, owing to the thoroughness of their scientific training, which our people lack. And why this lack? Dr. Armstrong replies, "In Germany the victory has been gained wholly and solely through the agency of the university. Here we are dominated by influences that had their origin in the monkish cell, and our ancient universities do nothing to help us." Without underrating the work they do, perhaps better than any other university could do it, it is surely time for us to desire an adequate university in London, that will meet our present-day needs and be worthy of the greatest and richest city in the world.

The *Forum* for September contains an article by Dr. Douglas H. Stewart, which throws a strange light upon the unsanitary condition of many of the public elementary schools in New York, and upon the indifference of the public to the injury done to the health and character of its future citizens by imperilling children to study in edifices badly planned, badly built, badly kept. Space will not permit at this time a thorough examination of his startling revelations, but they should warn us of dangers to which we are equally liable.

In the same issue Mrs. Barus takes Miss Millicent Shinn's book, "Notes on the Development of a Child" as a text, and points out the interest and value of detailed observations of a child's physical and mental growth when conducted scientifically upon the lines laid down by Preyer, Sir Francis Galton, and Professor Sully, and suggests that in many cases "maiden aunts" would be ideal observers.

October 14, 1895.

PATER JUNIOR.

OUR WORK.

House of Education.—Ladies wishing for Probationers for the Christmas holidays should apply at once to the Secretary, House of Education.*

House of Education Natural History Club. Notes by M. L. Hodgson. —Much pleasant and profitable time may be spent at this season of the year, in studying the many and various methods by which Nature provides for the dispersal of her harvest of fruit and seeds. We have so many ingenious devices around us in every common tree and plant, that it is difficult to decide which to study first. We might take for example all those fruits which are dispersed whole, those carried by pappus, or those which depend again on the animal life around them for transportation to new ground. Any will do to start with, only it is a good plan to keep a well-marked distinction of kinds in our heads, in order that we may quite plainly understand what it is we are doing. Let us begin, then, with our old favourites the trees; here we find winged fruits descending on all sides, whirling and twisting in every direction on windy days. The sycamores

* For the future, Students will be admitted to the House of Education in January only; not, as hitherto, in January or at Midsummer.

and maples with their double-winged fruits, and the ash with its quaint long single one; the fruit of the elms has been dispersed long ago. "The ruddy-hearted blossom flakes," as Tennyson calls them, fluttered down in myriads long before the spring flowers thought of going. The fruits of the alder, birch, pines, &c., are not dispersed whole, as is the case with those we have before mentioned, but if we examine the seeds in the catkins and cones we find a beautiful winged arrangement attached to each, so that practically they are dispersed in the same way as the entire fruits of the sycamore and ash. Most fairy-like and dainty are the wee winged seeds of the birches, many of the catkins are ripe and you may see them easily for yourselves. Think, now, of all the quaint processes by which the wind-dispersed seeds are armed for their flight into the world, some with broad membraneous lobes attached to them, some crowned with exquisite parachutes of silvery pappus, and others with long threads of down. Amongst all the fruits of this kind, perhaps none is more lovely than that of the common Jack-go-to-bed-at-noon (*Tragopogon pratensis*); in this we have a most exquisite form of parachute, consisting of a cup-like arrangement of branched pappus crowning a long stalk beautifully weighted by a heavy oblong fruit, which, in itself, is worthy of close examination. We can go on for some time enumerating plants which bear fruits crowned with pappus, and which belong to many different orders. We have the willows, the whole of the *compositæ*, the willow-herbs, the cotton grass; the cotton plant is also another familiar example, and here I may mention a curious fact as regards one genus in the *compositæ* in which the pappus is deciduous, and often in the winter, finches may be seen perched on the plant eating the fruit which is left in the involucre. You are all familiar with the common ragwort, *senecio jacobæa*, this is the plant I am referring to, and when I tell you that *senecio* comes from *senex*, you will see for yourselves that it is the profusion of the hoary-looking pappus which gives the name to the genus. This opens interesting biological questions. What use is the pappus if it blows away without the seed? How has the habit been formed? I cannot say. It is mentioned by both Babington and Hooker, though no explanation is afforded; but it is certainly worthy of attention. Many plants have covered their fruits with strong hooks and prickles, by which they are carried on the coats of passers-by to places far from the parent stem; a very familiar example, which we all know well, is the common burr. I will not enter further into this particular form, as I want to say a few words about protection as well as dispersal. I am afraid I can only spare a short space of time for the fruits which have laid themselves out to be eaten by making their seeds hard and indigestible and their covering attractive and good for food—berries, pomes and drupes of all kinds will readily occur to you; the seeds pass undigested through the animal's body, and being eaten possibly in some well-manured spot, at once commence life under favourable circumstances. Thus, you see how the life of the young plant is preserved, being covered with a horny coat it escapes injury, and this brings us to fruits, which, rich in themselves, adopt various disguises in order to avoid being eaten. Take nuts, for example, well-hidden by their green coats on the tree, well-disguised by their brown shells when they tumble beneath it, and covered with a

nauseating outer husk, their last wish is evidently that they should be eaten. So many interesting facts and theories come into my mind on the subject of fruits and seeds, that I wonder how anyone escapes getting up quite an enthusiasm for this particular branch of study. The quaint forms and shapes, the devices and colours, the strange adventures and fortunes of the rich harvest that every year covers the land, makes for me a sort of delightful fairy tale, which appeals far more to my imagination than it is possible for me to express in a few short notes, but which, I am sure, will appeal equally to many of you if you will only think about them. I am greatly pleased with the number of fruits you have all managed to see for yourselves during the past few weeks.

THE "P.R." LETTER BAG.

[The Editor is not responsible for the opinions of Correspondents].

DEAR EDITOR,—I think a little incident that came under my notice last week may be a hint to many parents. A little motherless school-fellow, aged 8, of my boy's, asked the latter what sort of books his mother gave him. "Oh, jolly ones," and then came the enumeration and descriptions. "Aren't there any horrors in them?" "Oh, no." "I wish my auntie would give me books like those, she gives me books with such *dreadful* things in them. When I was four she gave me a book about a man and his dogs on a desert island, and they got nothing to eat, and at last he had to kill the dogs, and he *skinned* them, and oh! I can't bear that bit about the skinning. And there are some others all about hunting and killing and skinning, and I see all the animals at night, and I can't bear them." I know the aunt, a most worthy maiden lady, with strict ideas of boys being made manly. With the best intentions she has either not read the books before giving them to the child, or she has that curious idea peculiar to many adults that children like horrors, and that details absolutely repulsive to a grown-up are suitable for the food of a little lad's imagination. The above conversation took place in the dormitory, when the light was to be put out, with the hand of one little schoolboy pleadingly stretched out to the others. It is not only nurses who frighten children, and the thoughtlessness of this aunt has possibly unnerved the child for years.

Yours, A MOTHER OF BOYS.

DEAR EDITOR,—I think the P.R. "Letter Bag" might be increased with advantage whenever you have space to spare. Members appreciate the opportunity of writing to consult, and all take a pleasure in reading letters from other members. I think, too, it would be an attractive feature if you had a "symposium" occasionally to discuss some such problems as the comparative advantages of boarding and day schools for town-bred children, and the like.

H.P.

DEAR EDITOR,—I find that I have no further use for:—"The Historic Faith" (Westcott), 6/-; "The Times of Isaiah" (Professor Sayre), 3/-;

"Nursing" (E. C. Lückes), 2/6; "Mother's Manual of Children's Diseases," 2/6; "Flowers, Fruits and Leaves" (Lubbock), 4/6; "A Year with the Birds" (Fowler), 3/6; which are recommended as studies for second-year Mother's Educational Course. And if you know of anyone looking for these books, those I have are in very good condition, and I can offer the lot for 10/- (postage of course not included), which is just half-price each book.

Yours truly, A.W.V.

For the books apply to the Secretary, House of Education, Ambleside.

DEAR EDITOR,—Could you or any of the readers of the *Parents' Review* tell me of a very simple manual on physiology suitable as a hand-book for lessons to young children. I am very anxious to find something which will enable me to give my children regular instruction on the subject in the form of an informal lecture. Huxley's *Elementary Physiology* enters into far too much detail, except for the use of real students, and I find it too difficult to extract the main lines of teaching from even so clear a treatise as his. I have been teaching a few simple facts about the various organs by the help of a capital little book now out of print, "The Child's Instructor," but it carries one so very short a distance as to merely awaken the appetite for more, but so far, these "Body Lessons," as the children call them, have been the most delightful to them of any they have had. They listen with the keenest interest and remember what they are told because of it. I should be very grateful to anyone who will kindly recommend me the sort of book I am looking for.

"MOTHER."

P.S.—I may add that the practical result of the lessons on the skin and its functions was to bring about a great zeal for scrubbing and tubbing, and the nails have on the whole been quite reformed characters in consequence!

P.N.E.U. NOTES.

Edited by HENRY PERRIN, Hon. Org. Sec., 8, Carlton Hill, N.W.

To whom Hon. Local Secs. are requested to send reports of all matters of interest connected with their branches, also 30 copies of any prospectuses or other papers they may print.

Chairman of Committee: Dr. A. T. Schofield. Vice-Chairman: Algernon C. P. Coote, Esq., M.A. Hon. Org. Sec.: Henry Perrin, Esq. Secretary: Pamphlets giving full particulars of the work of the Union, and the *Parents' Review* (6d. monthly), the organ of the Society, may be obtained from the Secretary, 28, Victoria Street, S.W., to whom all subscriptions and communications should be sent.

The Literature Committee acknowledge with thanks the gift by Mrs. Carus-Wilson, of Montreal, of her book "Clews of Holy Writ," to the Library of the P.N.E.U.

Natural History Club.—The Third Annual Exhibition in connection with this Club will be held on November 15th and 16th, at 50, Porchester Terrace, W. See advertisement for full particulars.